



**King County**



# ***King County 2005 Taxicab Annual Report***

***April 1, 2006***

*This report is submitted in compliance with King County Code 6.64.740.*

*This report includes:*

- *Brief history of taxicab regulations in King County*
- *Statistics regarding number of taxicabs, drivers, and complaints*
- *Survey results comparing current response times to previous reporting periods*
- *Relationships of actual response times to optimum average response times*
- *Information relating to licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County.*



King County

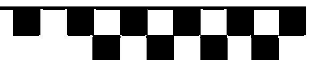
Department of Executive Services  
Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division

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# ***Executive Summary***

## ***Introduction***

With a population approaching two million people, King County is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest among U.S. counties and home to a taxicab fleet of 842 vehicles. Home to Washington's busiest port, Microsoft, Boeing, and the Seattle Tacoma International Airport, outbound trips from the airport have increased by 70 percent since 1997. This increase is explained by growth in the tourism industry and business travelers. Charged with safeguarding passengers, drivers and the public, the King County Taxicab Licensing Section provides regulation and enforcement of the taxicab industry in Washington's largest county.

Produced in accordance with King County Code (6.64.740), the 2005 Annual Taxicab Report provides statistical information on taxicabs and drivers, service response times, complaints, and other information relating to the licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County.

Beginning in 1976 King County embarked on a taxicab regulatory scheme to develop more consistent regulations and services across King County jurisdictions. Today, King County's Taxicab Licensing Section regulates the operation of taxicabs in unincorporated King County and has cooperative agreements to enforce regulations at Sea-Tac International Airport, as well as within the cities of Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Covington, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Kenmore, Kirkland, Maple Valley, Redmond, Sammamish, SeaTac, Shoreline and Seattle. This includes the regulation of rates, the manner in which fees are established, operating requirements and customer service standards, entry into the industry and the requirements for obtaining a license.

Drivers operating City of Seattle licensed taxicabs and for-hire vehicles must have a City of Seattle for-hire driver's license or a City of Seattle endorsement on their King County license. The City of Seattle contracts with King County to perform the licensing of for-hire drivers on behalf of the City and in return the City licenses all vehicles on behalf of the County.

## ***For-hire Drivers***

In 2005, the Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division processed 2,663 for-hire driver applications, a record high which represents a 14 percent increase from the previous year. For every taxicab in Seattle and King County, there are approximately 3.2 licensed for-hire drivers. To ensure public and passenger safety, each new applicant is carefully screened and must complete several requirements in order to qualify and obtain a for-hire license. This includes a two-day training course, a two and a half hour written exam, a physical exam, fingerprinting and a criminal background check.

### ***Taxicab Response Times***

The County Code requires the Licensing Section to establish a schedule of optimum times for responses to requests for taxi service. These response times are broken up by eight response zones throughout the county. Each year, the Licensing Section conducts an audit of taxicab company dispatch records to determine *actual* response times for service requests, which are then compared to the *optimum* response times. In 2005, the average service response times met the established optimum response time guidelines.

### ***City of Seattle Interlocal Service Agreement***

In 1995, King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement whereby the county issues all for-hire licenses and the city issues all taxicab vehicle licenses. This created efficiencies for city and county regulators as well as the industry. An integral part of this agreement is the granting of authority for each respective jurisdiction to enforce the regulations of the other, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing field enforcement personnel. Additionally, more than two thousand applicants in 2005 were able to apply for both licenses at a single convenient location.

### ***Challenges in 2006***

In 2005, King County continued to work in collaboration with the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle in task forces and work groups to discuss the issues of accessible taxicabs, limousine licensing (which is currently a state function), taximeter rate increases, and improvements to additional taxi and for-hire regulations. The Licensing Section plans to propose ordinance changes on behalf of the Port of Seattle in 2006 to require all limousine drivers operating at Sea-Tac airport to have a King County for-hire driver's license.

For the first time, King County and the City of Seattle taxicab fleet will expand to include eight wheelchair-accessible vans beginning in the spring of 2006. This joint one to two year demonstration project with King County Metro's Accessible Services section and the City of Seattle will provide accessible taxicab service to people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids that require the use of a ramp-equipped vehicle.

Wheelchair accessible taxicabs, or WAT, will operate the same as taxicabs and charge taximeter rates. The service will prioritize use for people who use wheelchairs but will also be available to the general public. The Licensing Section will seek input from a newly created Advisory Committee; will conduct field enforcement and inspections of new wheelchair accessible taxicab (WAT) vehicles and drivers.

# King County Taxicab History 1976 to 2004

The number of taxicabs licensed by King County from 1976 to the present:

Licensed Year	Total	Licensed Year	Total
1976/1978	73	1988/1989	603
1978/1979*	402	1989/1990	589
1979/1980	426	1990/1991	561
1980/1981	474	1991/1992	551
1981/1982	436	1992/1993	541
1982/1983	552	1993/1994	518
1983/1984	648	1994/1995	504
1984/1985	567	1995/1997	503
1985/1986	562	1997/1999	502
1986/1987	581	1999/2000	502
1987/1988	468	<b>2000/2006</b>	<b>502</b>

\*Deregulation and reciprocity

**1976:** King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle embarked on a program to regionalize taxicab regulations and licensing by developing consistent regulations and services across jurisdictions. The intent was to promote public safety and customer service by standardizing fees, regulations, enforcement, and rate review procedures throughout King County (King County Motion 2362).

**1976 to 1979:** Regionalization is implemented. The “need and necessity” provision for limiting entry was deleted, resulting in an increased number of licensed taxicabs. The Port terminated its exclusive contract for taxicab services at Sea-Tac Airport, and a growing number of independent taxicab operators obtained permits to service Sea-Tac Airport.

***Prior to 1979, King County regulated entry into the taxicab market and rates charged to passengers. Entry was restricted by a population ratio formula and the King County Council set rates after reviewing prescribed criteria. This “need and necessity” provision required new applicants to show that there was a bona fide need for taxicab service in that zone.***

**1979 to 1984:** The County and the City of Seattle passed ordinances deregulating entry standards and rates (King County Ordinance 4232). With no restrictions on the numbers of licenses issued, taxi owners set their own rates. The deregulation of taxicab licensing resulted in many problems in each jurisdiction. As deregulation continued, consumer views of taxicabs continued to slide; conditions were viewed as deteriorated and rate differences created the perception of price gouging.

**1984:** Regulation returned and a conscious effort was made to address the rate variation problem and to increase safety and improve cab conditions. A moratorium was placed on the issuance of new taxicab licenses and returned to setting taxi rates by ordinance.

**1985:** The county's entry moratorium on licenses expired in 1985, returning the county to open entry; however, rates continued to be set by County ordinance. Also in 1985, the Port of Seattle placed a moratorium on permits to operate at Sea-Tac Airport.

**1986:** The Ad Hoc Taxi Committee was created to study and recommend a method for determining the optimum number of taxis to operate in the county, the criteria and method for setting and/or changing taxicab rates, and a plan for developing reciprocity in enforcement and licensing of taxicab businesses. The work of the committee resulted in Ordinance 7964, which created a process to establish rate and entry recommendations based on objective data rather than industry requests, while also placing a moratorium on the issuance of new taxicab licenses.

***Since 1986, open entry existed for three brief periods, once during the verification process of a referendum in 1987, in early 1988, and for approximately one month in 1989.***

**September 1988:** King County, the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle formed the Regional Taxicab Commission to recommend rates, entry restrictions, and other related revisions to the King County Code. This was allowed through King County Ordinance 8450, March 21, 1988.

**June 10, 1991:** the King County Council passed Ordinance No. 9986, permanently closing the issuance of new taxicab licensing.

**December 1990:** In the fall of 1990, county and city staff drafted an ordinance incorporating many of the 1988 Regional Taxicab Commission entry model recommendations. Recommendations included increased standards for licensing and operations of taxicab vehicles and for-hire drivers; and proposed closed entry and maintained a single ordained rate at an increase of approximately 8 percent from \$1.20 drop/\$1.40 mile, to \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile. The fixed rate proposed was the same as the highest rate the city allowed (ceiling rate). County Proposed Ordinance 90-948 and City Ordinance 108357 were submitted to the City and County Councils in November 1990. A joint hearing was held on January 14, 1991, and the City of Seattle adopted the proposed ordinance. The City of Seattle, however, maintained its ceiling rate approach.

***The County Executive's original rate submission in 1990 of \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile was increased in July 1992 to \$1.60 drop/\$1.60 mile. The industry heavily lobbied for a higher rate, and the County Council adopted its request of \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 mile/\$.50 per minute waiting time.***

**August 17, 1992:** The County Council passed Ordinance 10498 which dramatically changed the for-hire vehicle/taxicab and for-hire driver standards and regulations.

Sweeping changes included in Ordinance 10498 were:

- continued closed entry system
- increased taxicab rate fee from 1.60 drop/\$1.60 mile to \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 mile
- changed the quarterly data collection process to an annual filing
- eliminated the required use of net profit ratio formula in rate and entry recommendations
- enhanced the mechanical certification process for vehicles
- enhanced the safety and cleanliness requirements for vehicles
- increased the number of mandatory safety inspections
- increased for-hire driver standards for entry and denial of licenses
- established several provisions to address consumer protection issues

**August 1995:** King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement. The agreement grants authority for the county to issue City of Seattle for-hire driver's licenses as an agent for the city and for the city to issue county taxicab vehicle licenses as an agent for the county. This agreement also grants authority for county and city license inspectors to enforce both city and county taxi codes and both licenses can be obtained at one convenient location.

**Fall 1996:** In late 1996, the City of Seattle proposed changes to its taxicab ordinance to streamline its laws with county regulations. However, the City of Seattle went further in several areas. Most significant was the requirement that taxicabs belong to associations. Associations are separately licensed entities that maintain a level of oversight liability for operations by vehicle owners and drivers, thereby placing some of the burden/cost to improve service standards on the industry itself. A monetary penalty schedule was established that set fines for violations by drivers, owners, and taxicab associations. Vehicle age restrictions were also implemented. In 1997, all city drivers were required to retake the written examination, and all city drivers, new and renewals alike, were required to take an oral test to demonstrate English-language proficiency. These changes affected approximately 80 percent of county licensees since drivers were required to have both city and county licenses.

**November 2000:** The County Council passed Ordinance 13984 amending standards for the denial of a for-hire driver's license. The ordinance added mandatory denial language for applicants with bail forfeitures or convictions within five years of the date of application for vehicle assault, vehicular homicide or reckless driving. In addition, the ordinance itemized a number of criminal offenses as set out in state law (RCW Title 9) as discretionary grounds for the denial of a license.

**Spring 2001:** Beginning in the spring of 2001, King County, the Port of Seattle, and the City of Seattle formed a "Regionalization Workgroup" to study the feasibility of opening access at Sea-Tac Airport to all licensed taxicabs. The desire was to create efficiencies by further regionalizing the County, City and Port ordinances

and reducing “dead-heading” (taxicabs unable to pick-up passengers must travel back empty), reduce excess pollutants, and expand the number of taxicabs that operate across the entire region. Port Commissioners declined to open entry to all taxicabs operating in King County at Sea-Tac Airport and re-signed an exclusive operating agreement with one taxicab company, STITA Taxi Association.

**June 2001:** The county, lead by Metro’s Accessible Services, joined a task force with representatives from the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and other stakeholders to address the issue of taxicab accessibility for citizens with wheelchairs and other mobility devices. In late 2003, Metro Accessible Services secured grant money from the state and began meeting with King County Licensing and City of Seattle representatives to develop implementation plans for licensing and placing into service wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. Ordinances were passed by both the County and the City of Seattle to initiate a one- to two- year demonstration project to study wheelchair accessible taxicab service issues. City of Seattle (Ordinance 121857) and King County Ordinance 15263 became effective August 17, 2005 and September 18, 2005 respectively.

**November 15, 2004:** Ordinance 15059 increased taxicab vehicle and driver fees to help recover licensing and enforcement costs and reflect inflation. Vehicle fees increased from \$240 to \$300 per year and for-hire driver application fees increased from \$60 to \$75 per year (plus a \$5 photo fee).

**December 2004:** A taximeter rate increase was proposed (Proposed Ordinance 2004-0466) to increase rates from \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 per mile to \$2.50 drop/\$2.00 per mile. Rates had not been increased in nearly twelve years (since 1992) and the cost of living had increased 36 percent. In addition, operating costs such as fuel had soared by more than 78 percent since 1992. Based on a 15-mile trip, the proposed rate represented only a 13 percent increase. The increase was proposed by the City of Seattle’s Taxicab Advisory Group, which included taxicab drivers, owners and associations; senior and disabled citizens from the community; and Department of Social and Health Services providers. There was no opposition to the increase; By all accounts, the general public agreed with the need to increase fees to keep up with inflation.



## 2005 King County Taxicab History

Four ordinances passed in 2005: the meter rate increase, a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses, a pilot program to implement and study wheelchair accessible taxicab service, and the establishment of an advisory committee to study the accessible taxi issue.

Below are the specifics of each ordinance:

**Ordinance 15132**: passed and increased taximeter rates to \$2.50 drop/\$2.00 per mile. The rates went into effect on April 1, 2005, for both the County and the City of Seattle. County and City of Seattle inspectors worked together to ensure all 842 taxicabs had their meters tested and sealed by early afternoon that day. As an added convenience to the taxicab owners and drivers, County and City of Seattle staff arranged the special meter inspections to occur at the taxi company lots.

***In 2005, more than 2,000 drivers applied for the combined city/county license. This arrangement greatly benefited the county, especially in the area of increased enforcement actions and inspections.***

**Ordinance 15263**: Established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project, and also included minor changes which affected taxicab insurance, added an additional driver safety training requirement, added a mandatory oral English test, and changed the taxicab licensee year. The ordinance became effective September 18, 2005, and the pilot project is expected to be implemented in the Spring of 2006.

- The Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project

Tests the economic viability of privately owned and operated accessible taxicabs that provide taxicab service at taximeter rates to passengers in wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The project, scheduled to be launched in the Spring of 2006, is a one- to two- year demonstration project with King County Metro's Accessible Services section to issue eight (8) King County and City of Seattle licensed taxicab vans. The service will prioritize use for people who use wheelchairs but will also be available to the general public.

- The Oral English Test Requirement

Primarily affects the 790 County-only licensed taxicab drivers operating at Sea-Tac airport. The remaining dual license and city license applicants had previously passed the exam as part of the City of Seattle's license requirements in 1997. Since the Port of Seattle recently required the Oral English test as part of its civil contract with STITA taxicab association, the codification of this requirement was mostly a matter of keeping consistency with the City requirements and an additional tool for screening applicants.

**Ordinance 15309:** Approved a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses and made taxicab licenses issued after January 1, 2006, nontransferable (effective November 13, 2005). Currently taxicab licenses are transferable meaning that they can be bought and sold on the open market. The nontransferability issue arose from complaints and comments received from taxicab drivers during public hearings on the WAT Demonstration project.

**Ordinance 15282:** Council established the Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee to be selected in the Spring of 2006. The committee will consist of nine members recruited by the Executive in consultation with the Council. Membership of the committee will reflect the diversity and geographic distribution of county residents and seven of the members will be appointed before start-up of the WAT Demonstration project and the remaining two positions will be filled later by WAT users having experience with the service. This committee will help ensure that the pilot project is implemented in a way that will accurately gauge the demand for and viability of accessible taxi service in the Seattle and King County markets. The committee will monitor the preparation for and implementation of the pilot project and will advise the King County Licensing and Metro Accessible Service sections.

## ***Taxicab Trips***

Seattle-Tacoma International Taxicab Association, known as “STITA,” represents 166 County-only licensed taxicabs. STITA reported a record setting 639,751 outbound trips from Sea-Tac Airport in 2005, a 10 percent increase over the previous year.

Overall, outbound trips have increased by 70 percent since 1997. This increase is explained by growth in the tourism industry and business travelers. The airport suffered a temporary 4.4 percent drop in 2001 which can be attributed to the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 terrorist attacks and a subsequent decrease in passenger airline travel. The City of Seattle requires taxicab associations to report service information for taxicabs operating within their association. The number of paid trips reported for 2005 was approximately 2.8 million, consistent with the previous year. King County and Seattle taxicabs combined provided approximately 3.5 million taxi trips in King County in 2005.

## ***Interlocal Agreements***

In August 1995, King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement to eliminate redundant services and regulation. Under the agreement, the city will perform all licensing functions for taxicab vehicles, and the county will perform all for-hire driver licensing functions. Under the 1995 agreement, jurisdictions are granted the authority to enforce the taxicab regulations of other jurisdictions, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing personnel. As a part of this agreement, taxicab vehicle and for-hire driver applicants are able to apply for both licenses at a single convenient location.

The county has interlocal service agreements with the Port of Seattle, which operates Sea-Tac Airport, the City of Seattle, as well as 13 additional cities in King County for taxicab licensing and enforcement services.

### **Interlocal Service Agreements**

<b>City</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>
Auburn	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Bellevue	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Burien	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Covington	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Enumclaw	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Federal Way	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kenmore	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kirkland	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Maple Valley	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Port of Seattle	Enforcement of County Taxi Code on Port Property
Redmond	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Sammamish	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
SeaTac	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Seattle	Licensing of City For-Hire Drivers and Enforcement of City Code
Shoreline	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code



# Taxicab Response Times

King County Code 6.64.730 establishes a schedule of optimum average response times for taxicab service. Each year this schedule is compared to actual response times, and serves as an indicator of taxicab industry performance and is intended to help determine the number of taxicabs needed.

In developing the optimum average taxicab response times, King County was divided into eight zones (attachment A).

## Time response survey zones

ZONES	SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION
A	North City	Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, North County
B	Northeast County	Bothell, Woodinville, Fall City, Sammamish, Issaquah
C	Eastside	Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond
D <sup>1</sup>	South/Southwest County	White Center, Burien, Des Moines, West Kent, Airport (West of I-5)
E	North/Southeast County	Renton, Tukwila, May Creek, Newcastle, North Kent (East of I-5)
F	South County	Federal Way, Auburn, South Kent
G	Southeast County	Enumclaw, Black Diamond, Covington, Maple Valley
City	Seattle	All Seattle city limits

<sup>1</sup>Sea-Tac Airport is serviced by 166 King County taxicabs. Taxicabs are available on demand; therefore, the response time is zero and is not included in Zone D (the airport area).

Actual response times were established in 1987 and were calculated as the time from the request for service to the time the driver picked up the passenger. The average actual taxicab response time in 2005 was equal to or faster than the average optimum taxicab response time in all zones.

## Taxicab response times

Zone	Service Area	Optimum Average	Actual Average Response Time (minutes)											
			'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05
A	North City	15	14	13	15	13	16	14	13	13	15	15	14	13
B	NE County	20	19	18	20	19	15	15	18	14	16	18	20	20
C	Eastside	15	12	13	15	14	13	14	11	15	14	13	15	14
D	South/SW County	15	10	11	10	12	12	11	13	15	14	14	14	13
E	North/SE County	20	14	15	14	15	14	15	13	12	13	18	19	17
F	South County	20	16	17	16	18	17	16	14	17	16	18	20	18
G	Southeast County	30	21	21	22	23	22	23	27	29	28	30	29	26
City	Seattle	10	11	10	9	8	9	8	8	9	9	10	8	9



# Complaints

King County Licensing’s long-established taxi complaint line, **206-296-TAXI**, is visibly displayed in all Seattle and King County taxicabs and offers citizens the opportunity to file a complaint with King County or the City of Seattle.

***King County Code 6.64.910** creates a process for handling complaints. Once the complaint is received, the taxicab driver and/or owner is issued a written Notice of Complaint detailing the allegations. The driver and/or owner is required to respond in writing within 10 working days with his or her explanation or clarification of the incident.*

*Failure to respond constitutes a waiver of the driver/owner’s right to contest the allegations and will be considered prima facie evidence that the allegations are true. All statements are reviewed, information is collected and following the completion of the investigation, appropriate administrative action is taken. A finding is made as to the validity of the allegations in the complaint, and if substantiated, a Notice and Order is issued assessing civil penalties or other administrative action such as suspension or revocation of the for-hire license.*

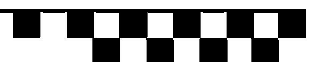
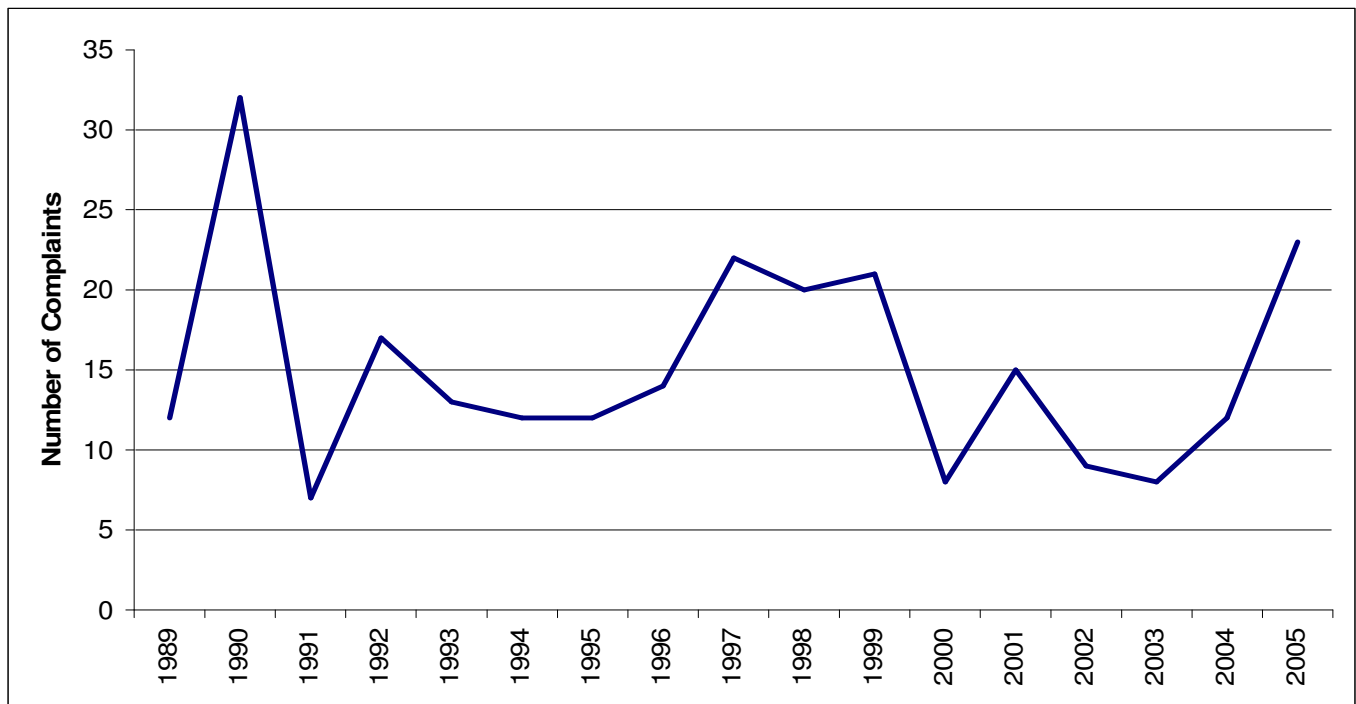
Historically, King County receives very few written complaints. The following table represents written complaints filed with King County since 1989. Complaints regarding driver conduct (rude behavior) and rate charged (suspected overcharge) continue to be the most frequent complaints reported.

Of the 23 written complaints filed in 2005, 10 resulted in the assessment of monetary civil penalties, three of which also had their licenses temporarily suspended, nine were issued warning notices regarding their behavior, one was also required to refund the fare amount, and one complaint charge required the driver to have the vehicle re-inspected and an exhaust issue corrected.



# Complaints

Year	Short Haul Refusal	Wrong Rate Wrong Route	Conduct Cab Driver	Vehicle Condition	Service Response	Total
1989		7	5			12
1990	1	19	11		1	32
1991		5	1	1		7
1992	2	6	5	3	1	17
1993	1	10	2			13
1994	2	6	3	1		12
1995	1	3	6	1	1	12
1996	1	7	3		3	14
1997	1	7	14			22
1998	1	3	15		1	20
1999	1	10	9		1	21
2000	0	3	5	0	0	8
2001	1	6	8	0	0	15
2002	0	1	8	0	0	9
2003	0	3	4	1	0	8
2004	0	4	7	1	0	12
2005	1	9	11	1	1	23



# Taxicab Ownership

## King County licensed taxicabs by association

	Independent (no association)	Farwest	Yellow/ Graytop	Northend	STITA	Orange	Other Associations	TOTAL
87/88 <sup>1</sup>	206	218	24	20	--	--	--	468
88/89 <sup>2</sup>	194	219	168	22	--	--	--	603
89/90	86	209	165	22	107	--	--	589
90/91	45	168	160	22	166	--	--	561
91/92	58	158	147	22	166	--	--	551
92/93	45	166	141	23	166	--	--	541
93/94	55	144	131	23	165	--	--	518
94/95	47	149	119	23	166	--	--	504
95/96	35	143	120	23	166	16	--	503
96/97	30	145	114	23	166	25	--	503
97/98	19	143	113	24	166	37	--	503
98/99	1	145	117	23	166	36	14	502
99/00	1	135	117	22	166	47	14	502
00/01	0	132	119	22	166	47	13	502
01/02	0	90	131	23	166	76	16	502
02/03	0	94	131	22	166	76	13	502
03/04	0	86	144	20	166	73	13	502
04/05	0	86	146	20	166	73	11	502
05/06	0	76	148	20	166	92	0	502

<sup>1</sup>Taxi licensing moratorium lapsed from 12/31/87 to 5/1/88.

<sup>2</sup>Taxi licensing moratorium lapsed from 1/1/89 to 1/31/89.

## Rates

The following schedule illustrates King County taxicab rates from 1974 to the present:

YEAR	DROP	PER MILE	WAIT PER/MIN	EXTRAS
1974-76	.80	.60	.12	.20
1976-79	.90	.70	.12	--
1979-80 <sup>3</sup>	1.00	1.00	.30	.50
1981-84 <sup>3</sup>	1.00	1.20	.30	.50
1984-86	1.00	1.20	.30	.50 over 2
1987-92 <sup>4</sup>	1.20	1.40	.35	.50 over 2
1992-2005 <sup>5</sup>	1.80	1.80	.50	.50 over 2
2005 - present	2.50	2.00	.50	.50 over 2

<sup>3</sup> Rate not set by ordinance. The median rate is shown.

<sup>4</sup> Through September 6, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In 2001, Seattle adopted a fixed rate of \$25 for trips originating from the downtown hotel district to Sea-Tac Airport.



# 2005 Taxi Fares in Major U.S. Cities

Approved for publishing by Bruce Schaller, Schaller Consulting, [www.schallerconsult.com](http://www.schallerconsult.com)

Area costs ...City	Fares for typical trips			Components of the fare					Last change
	Avg. U.S. trip	Short trip	Long trip	Initial charge	Initial distance	Mileage charge	Mileage distance	Wait time per hour	
** Honolulu	\$ 18.35	\$ 12.09	\$ 37.95	2.45	1/8	0.35	1/8	28.00	May-05
** San Diego	16.17	10.59	33.67	2.25	1/10	0.25	1/10	20.00	
* Miami	16.10	10.73	32.90	2.50	1/6	0.40	1/6	24.00	Oct-05
** San Francisco	15.90	10.85	31.65	2.85	1/5	0.45	1/5	27.00	Sep-03
** Boston	15.45	10.08	32.25	1.75	1/8	0.30	1/8	24.00	Sep-02
** Los Angeles	15.00	10.07	30.40	2.20	1/11	0.20	1/11	24.00	Nov-05
* Seattle	14.80	10.29	28.80	2.50	1/10	0.20	1/10	30.00	Apr-05
Las Vegas	14.75	10.27	28.75	3.20	1/8	0.25	1/8	22.00	Apr-05
St. Louis	14.30	9.81	28.30	2.50	1/10	0.20	1/10	24.00	Jul-03
* Philadelphia	14.17	9.47	28.87	2.30	1/7	0.30	1/7	20.00	Jul-05
Atlanta	14.00	9.52	28.00	2.50	1/8	0.25	1/8	21.00	Oct-05
Orlando	13.38	8.89	27.38	2.00	1/4	0.25	1/8	22.50	
Minneapolis	13.37	9.11	26.67	2.50	1/5	0.38	1/5	21.00	Sep-05
Denver	13.23	8.74	27.23	1.60	1/8	0.25	1/8	22.50	
** New York	13.10	8.65	27.10	2.50	1/5	0.40	1/5	12.00	May-04
Phoenix	12.87	8.83	27.10	2.50	1/6	0.30	1/6	20.00	
Houston	12.85	8.81	25.45	2.50	1/6	0.30	1/6	20.00	Aug-05
** Chicago	12.70	8.66	25.30	2.25	1/9	0.20	1/9	20.00	May-05
** DC suburbs	12.08	8.35	23.70						
Dallas	12.55	8.52	25.15	2.25	1/9	0.20	1/9	18.00	Nov-05
New Orleans	11.80	8.21	23.00	2.50	1/8	0.20	1/8	18.00	
Detroit	11.65	8.07	22.85	2.50	1/8	0.20	1/8	16.00	Aug-01
Baltimore	11.60	7.99	22.80	1.80	1/8	0.20	1/8	24.00	Jul-05
Cleveland	10.78	7.21	21.98	1.80	1/6	0.40	1/4	15.00	

## Notes:

\*\* "Area costs" reflect cost of living in the metro area. Two stars indicate costs at least 25 percent above U.S. average; one star indicates living costs are 15-24 percent above U.S. average. Source: ACCRA produces the Cost of Living Index ([www.coli.org](http://www.coli.org)).

Fares shown exclude additional charges for extra passengers, luggage, time of day surcharges, airport fees, temporary gasoline surcharges, etc.

## Trip lengths:

- Average U.S. trip = 5 miles and 5 minutes of wait time.
- Short trip = 2.8 miles and 4.77 minutes of wait time (New York City average trip)
- Long trip = 12 miles and 5 minutes of wait time





## ***For-hire Drivers***

In October 1995, King County signed an interlocal service agreement with the City of Seattle to license all for-hire drivers. The city numbers, along with the results of the application process, are reported below. City of Seattle drivers may obtain either a county license endorsed for operating in the City of Seattle (proof of a city Business and Occupation license is required), or they can obtain a city-only for-hire license that allows them to pick up passengers only inside the city limits of Seattle.

***Approximately 80 percent of all for-hire drivers were born outside the United States and speak English as a second language.***

All for-hire driver applicants are required to take a written examination and attend a two-day training program. New applicants for a City of Seattle license are also required to take an oral test to demonstrate English proficiency and complete a one-week taxicab association training program.

The number of for-hire driver licensees has steadily increased each year with an approximate 35 percent growth since 1997. The actual number of for-hire drivers operating at any given time is difficult to calculate because taxicab drivers operate on a full-time, part-time, and occasional basis.

## ***Driver Interviews***

Driving records obtained from the State of Washington Department of Licensing are carefully reviewed for both new drivers and drivers renewing licenses. Beginning in 1990, Licensing staff began interviewing drivers with marginal driving records (i.e., with records that showed a pattern of an increased number of moving violations but not serious enough or numerous enough to substantiate an immediate denial).

***The median age for taxicab drivers is approximately 40 years of age (ranging from 21 – 74 years). The minimum age requirement for drivers is 21 years old.***

In 2005, nearly 100 drivers were interviewed and counseled regarding their driving records. In some cases, drivers are required to sign consent forms for review of their driving records on a quarterly basis. In some cases, drivers are required to attend a defensive driving course (this is in addition to the four-hour defensive driving course all new drivers must attend). The interviews have been successful on two fronts: the driving records of most drivers that have been interviewed and counseled improve; and in the case of drivers who do not improve, the subsequent denial or revocation of their license has the added weight that the driver was informed of the consequence of continued unsafe driving.

## For-hire Driver's License Applications

Year	License type	Number processed
1992	County only	1613
1993	County only	1160
1994	County only	1200
1995	County only	983
	County*	246
	City only	124
1996	County only	446
	County*	818
	City only	601
1997	County only	447
	County*	965
	City only	189
1998	County only	555
	County*	1244
	City only	54
1999	City only	517
	County*	1408
	City only	47
2000	County only	486
	County*	1572
	City only	37
2001	County only	497
	County*	1639
	City only	33
2002	County only	529
	County*	1690
	City only	37
2003	County only	498
	County*	1866
	City only	29
2004	County only	463
	County*	1912
	City only	21
2005	County only	490
	County*	1991
	City only	21

Year	Total licenses
1992	1613
1993	1160
1994	1200
1995	1353
1996	1865
1997	1601
1998	1853
1999	1972
2000	2095
2001	2169
2002	2256
2003	2393
2004	2396
2005	2663

\*Indicates a King County license with a city endorsement



## Written Examination

In 1985, King County began testing for-hire drivers with a 100-question written examination as a prerequisite for a license. The current examination, required by King County Code 6.64.580, tests applicant knowledge of the regulations for fare determination, driver-passenger relations, driver conduct, ability to understand oral and written directions in the English language, vehicle safety requirements, and a satisfactory geographical knowledge of King County and surrounding areas.

Applicants must obtain a passing score of 80 percent on both sections of the exam. If a driver fails the exam, his or her license application is denied, and the driver must wait 60 days before he or she can reapply and take the exam again.

***In 2004, King County administered 679 written taxi exams to 479 new applicants. In 1997, the City of Seattle restricted the number of times an applicant can take the written test to two attempts. In March 2002, King County adopted a similar rule.***

Applicants for a county and/or city license do not receive a temporary license until they have passed the written examination. Over the years, the percentage of drivers failing the written examination the first time has increased from 25 percent in 1992 to 53 percent in 2005. This is due in part to a more comprehensive examination but also because of the increase in new drivers where English is a second language. The vast majority of applicants, who failed the written exam in 2005, failed the geography portion. After failing the first time, the majority of applicants pass the written exam after further study and re-examination.

### Written examination results

	Tests Given		Passes		Fails		Percent Failed	
1992	602		451		151		25%	
1993	580		413		167		29%	
1994	638		499		139		22%	
1995	665		451		214		32%	
1996	714		429		285		40%	
1997 <sup>1</sup>	New:	453	New:	208	New:	245	New:	55%
	Renew:	1,086	Renew:	704	Renew:	382	Renew:	36%
	Total:	1,539	Total:	912	Total:	627		
1998	821		473		348		42%	
1999	803		416		387		48%	
2000	710		392		318		45%	
2001	777		328		449		58%	
2002	746		310		436		58%	
2003	738		330		408		55%	
2004	687		291		396		57%	
2005	701		331		370		53%	

<sup>1</sup> In 1997, the City required all drivers to retake the written examination.



# Enforcement

The King County Code provides several avenues for enforcement of violations of taxicab regulations. These include Notices of Violation that are issued in the field upon observation of a violation, administrative Notice and Orders with a provision for an administrative appeal, and citations. Civil penalties can also be assessed through the Notice and Order process. Beginning in the fall of 1995, the City of Seattle began issuing King County Code violations while conducting inspections of city and county dual-licensed taxicabs. This is reflected in the increase in enforcement actions taken since 1995.

In 2002, additional emphasis was placed on field enforcement and the trip sheet reporting requirement which resulted in an increase in the number of Notice and Orders issued, as well as civil penalties assessed. Since the administrative process of issuing civil penalties is effective, the citation process is an available tool that is rarely used.

## Type of enforcement action

	Notice of Violation	Citation
1992	33	2
1993	14	3
1994	22	2
1995	193	0
1996	269	0
1997	213 <sup>1</sup>	0
1998	154	0
1999	103	0
2000	119	0
2001	173 <sup>2</sup>	0
2002	199	0
2003	251	0
2004	255	0
2005	268	0

1 City of Seattle began to issue Summary Suspensions to county-licensed taxicabs by the city.

2 City of Seattle hired part-time taxi inspector exclusively for field inspections.

## Notice and orders

	Drivers			Owners	
	Denials	Other	Insurance	Other	TOTAL
1992	57	18	75	54	204
1993	40	28	14	25	107
1994	36	9	29	64	138
1995	39	7	0	0	46 <sup>1</sup>
1996	71 <sup>2</sup>	26	0	0	97
1997	37	25	21	1	84
1998	36	17	24	1	78
1999	28	12	11	10	61
2000	26	2	0 <sup>3</sup>	0	28
2001	37	0	0	0	37
2002	40	39	0	2	81
2003	25	16	0	0	41
2004	39	23	0	0	62
2005	34	78	0	0	112

<sup>1</sup> City of Seattle began licensing county vehicles; violations for failing to maintain insurance handled differently.

<sup>2</sup> County began licensing city drivers in 1996, thus the increase in driver denials.

<sup>3</sup> City implemented computerized tracking system to prevent lapses in insurance.



## Civil penalties

	Driver: Assessed			Paid	Owner: Assessed			Paid
1992	17	\$960		\$810	17	\$735		\$735
1993	8	\$425		\$375	5	\$550		\$300
1994	9	\$500		\$500	2	\$321		\$321
1995	3	\$300		\$300	1	\$150		\$150
1996	4	\$300		\$300	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1997	5	\$475		\$175	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1998	4	\$200		\$200	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1999	3	\$125		\$125	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2000	2	\$ 75		\$75	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2001	6	\$643		\$643	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2002	37	\$1460		\$1460	2	\$120		\$120
2003	16	\$ 570		\$570	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2004	18	\$1120		\$870	1	\$1000		\$ 0
2005	42	\$2785		\$1745	4	\$3100		\$100

## Cases appealed to the King County Board of Appeals

	DRIVER	Overruled	Upheld	OWNER	Overruled	Upheld
1992	12	2	10	2	1	1
1993	16	2	14	1	0	1
1994	9	1	8	16	1	15
1995	9	0	9	0	0	0
1996	28	4	24	0	0	0
1997	20	6	14	0	0	0
1998	5	0	5	0	0	0
1999	8	1	7	0	0	0
2000	8	0	8	0	0	0
2001	9	0	9	0	0	0
2002	12	1	11	0	0	0
2003	5	0	5	0	0	0
2004	6	1	5	1	0	1
2005	9	0	9	2	0	2



# ***Challenges for 2006***

## ***Wheelchair Accessible Taxicabs***

In June 2001, the County, lead by Metro's Accessible Services, joined a task force with representatives from the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and other stakeholders to address the issue of accessibility for citizens with wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

***Ordinance 15309 (effective November 13, 2005) established a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses and further made any taxicab license issued after January 1, 2006, nontransferable including any wheelchair accessible taxicabs.***

On August 29, 2005, the King County Council adopted an ordinance establishing licensing and standards of operations for the wheelchair accessible taxicab pilot demonstration project (Ordinance 15263:).

## ***Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee***

The Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee was established by council and will be selected in the Spring of 2006 and will consist of nine members. This committee will help ensure that the pilot project is implemented in a way that will accurately gauge the demand for and viability of accessible taxi service in the Seattle and King County markets. The committee will monitor the preparation for and implementation of the pilot project and will advise the King County Licensing and Metro Accessible Service sections. Once the pilot program is completed, the committee will submit a report to the executive and council, including an evaluation of the demo project and recommendations on future accessible taxi service.

## ***Limousine Drivers***

With direction from the Port of Seattle, King County may adopt ordinance changes on behalf of the Port to require limousine drivers operating at Sea-Tac Airport to obtain King County for-hire driver's licenses in an effort to increase public safety, provide better enforcement, and improve service to the public.

## ***Taxicab Licensing***

The development of the specific methodology for reapportioning the 59 taxicab licenses will be under consideration in 2006 along with updates to the existing taxi regulations. These changes will better align the King County Code to City of Seattle regulations and will consider issues such as:

- Additional driver and passenger safety standards,
- Streamlining the passenger complaint process,
- Fuel surcharge to compensate drivers and offset higher gas prices,
- Braille sign requirements in taxicabs, and;
- Implementing monetary penalty for smoking ban violations

## ***Additional Information***

### ***Taxicab Scrip Vouchers***

King County Metro's Accessible Services program issues taxicab scrip to King County residents who have a reduced bus fare permit and have income at or below 70 percent of the state median income. Participants who register for the paratransit OPTIONS program have their choice of using limited paratransit van service weekdays to travel to and from the nearest Metro bus stop, if they live further than three blocks from regular Metro service, or subsidized taxi scrip with the cab company of their choice—or both if they desire.

Registrants can purchase up to six books of scrip each month; scrip does not expire. Each booklet has a \$10 face value and contains coupons in \$0.50 and \$1 denominations. Registrants pay 50 percent of the face value or \$5 per booklet. Currently, eight taxicab companies participate in the taxicab scrip program.

Historically, most trips are short and taken in the urban Seattle area where taxi service is more available and destinations are closer together, but statistics indicate that the trips are becoming longer.

### ***City of Seattle Ordinance History***

In late 1996, the City of Seattle adopted comprehensive amendments to its taxicab/for-hire vehicle regulations. They adopted rate and entry standards, and for-hire driver and vehicle standards that paralleled the County's. However, the City of Seattle adopted several new provisions that are different from the County's; specifically:

Taxicab Associations: All taxicabs must affiliate with a licensed taxicab association in order to operate in the City of Seattle. Associations must represent a minimum of fifteen taxicabs. Associations, in addition to drivers and owners, can receive penalty points for violations. Associations must provide one week of training for all new drivers to include three shifts on the road and instruction in geography. Complaint logs must be maintained and open for random audits. Associations must have their taxicab color scheme and driver uniforms approved by the city, maintain a regular business office during business hours, keep insurance records for vehicles in the association, collect and provide service information to the director annually, and notify the director when certain events occur; for example, accidents or arrests of owners/drivers.

Vehicle Age Restrictions: An eight-year age limit went into effect on August 31, 2002, which had been slowly phased in over the next three years.

Penalty Points: The City sets out a specific monetary penalty schedule for violations. Each violation results in penalty points attributed to the taxicab association. For example, a third "Class B" violation (such as worn tires) would result in 10 penalty points assessed against the association. As soon as the association accumulates more than five penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, it must pay a penalty to the city of \$100 per affiliated taxicab; more than seven penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$150 per affiliated taxicab; more than 10 penalty points per taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$250 per affiliated taxicab. Associations, in addition to payment of penalty points, are jointly and

severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver or taxicab affiliated with the association. Taxicab and for-hire vehicle owners are also jointly and severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver who commits a violation.

The City of Seattle reports improvements in the appearance and condition of taxicabs. The most dramatic examples are the reduction in the age of taxicabs and the decrease in non-compliance with vehicle safety standards. For example, the average age of vehicles used as taxicabs in 1995 was 10 years. During 1997, the City began a three-year phase-in of limiting the maximum vehicle age to eight years. As a result, many of the older vehicles have been replaced and the average vehicle age is now 6.5 years. Similarly, noncompliance with vehicle safety and equipment standards has declined sharply. During scheduled vehicle inspections in 1995, 71 percent of all taxicabs licensed by the City of Seattle were found to be in violation of one or more of the vehicle standards. That rate has declined considerably to 20 percent. This dramatic improvement is attributed to the inspection fees and monetary penalties provided in the new taxi code.

The seriousness of violations has also been significantly reduced over the past decade. For instance, the number of Seattle taxicab licenses summarily suspended for vehicle standard safety violations declined from 410 in 1995 to only 78 in 2004. Part of the improvement is due to efforts by taxicab associations to pre-inspect vehicles in order to avoid collecting penalty points. Also, drivers are now required to conduct safety checklist inspections of taxicabs prior to starting each shift.

On March 15, 2000, the city passed an ordinance amending its taxicab code. Among the amendments was a \$25 flat rate charged for all trips from the downtown hotel district to Sea-Tac International Airport. The flat rate is only charged on trips originating in the downtown area, while meter rates apply on trips originating at the airport. The county has not received any complaints from the public or recommendations from the Port of Seattle to adopt a similar flat rate from Sea-Tac Airport to the downtown hotel district.

The city amended its taxicab rules on April 1, 2001. The principal changes included: definition of "operating a taxicab;" requirement for quarterly service information reports; requirement for monthly summary of vehicle collision reports; provision for monetary penalties for complaints about refusal of service to disabled persons or because of racial discrimination; requirements for evidence of vehicle insurance; and designation of non-smoking vehicles.



In 2005, the City of Seattle passed a number of ordinances aimed at improving driver safety, increasing fees, meter rates, and improving reporting requirements as set out below:

### 2005 City of Seattle Ordinances

<b>Ordinance 121737</b>	Taximeter rate, flat rate, and temporary fuel surcharge. [effective April 1, 2005].
<b>Ordinance 121738</b>	Taxicab license fees, wheelchair accessible taxicabs, taxicab association reporting, taxicab association supervisors at designated taxicab zones, taxicab insurance, receipt-issuing taximeters, Braille information notices, security cameras, monitored silent alarms, GPS, driver personal safety training, refusal of service, methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses, hearings, and passenger complaints. [effective April 1, 2005].
<b>Ordinance 121857</b>	Taxicab associations, security cameras, and wheelchair accessible taxicabs. [effective August 17, 2005]
<b>Ordinance 121942</b>	Compliance dates for passenger information decal, Braille signs, security cameras, and silent alarms. [effective November 12, 2005]

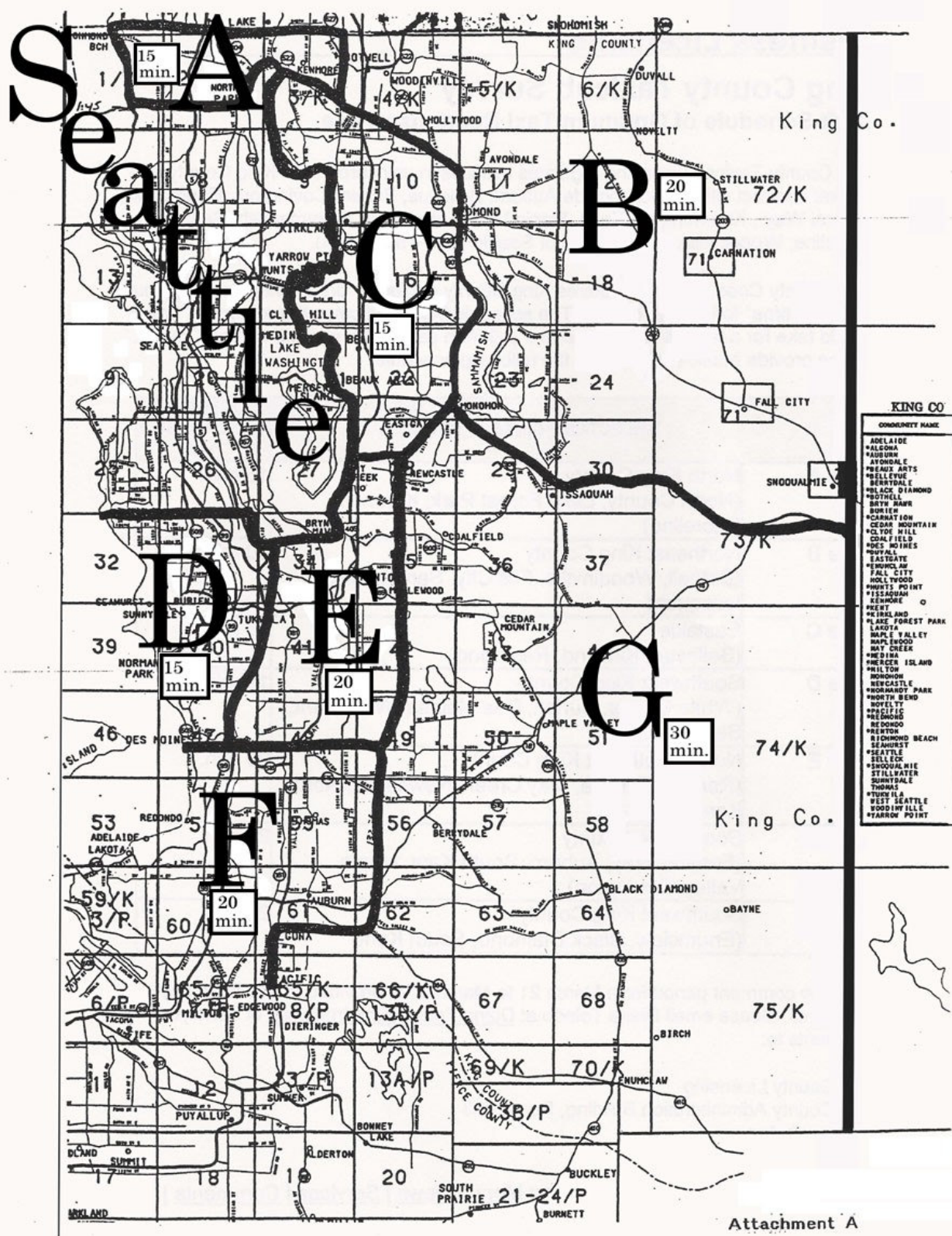
### 2005 City of Seattle Rules

<b>Rule 6.310.320 J</b>	Temporary suspension of flat rate to airport [effective July 1, 2005]
<b>Rule 6.310.320 S</b>	Requirement to install digital security cameras in taxicabs [effective August 15, 2005].
<b>Rule 6.310.530 I</b>	Temporary fuel surcharge to compensate drivers for increased gas prices [effective October 24, 2005]
<b>Rule 6.310.420 A</b>	Written and oral examination requirement to improve driver safety [effective October 24, 2005]
<b>Rule 6.310.320 P</b>	Vehicle type and size to encourage fuel efficient, and low emission taxicabs [effective October 24, 2005]
<b>Rule 6.310.320 M</b>	Passenger information [effective October 24, 2005]
<b>Rule 6.310.320 T</b>	Standards for installing silent alarms in taxicabs [effective October 24, 2005]



## Appendix A

## TAXICAB TIME RESPONSE ZONES



## Appendix B

### Business Licensing

Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division  
Department of Executive Services

#### King County Taxicab Survey

##### Draft Schedule of Optimum Taxi Response Time

King County Taxicab Licensing regulates taxicabs in unincorporated King County and several contract cities which include Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Covington, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Kenmore, Kirkland, Maple Valley, Redmond, Sammamish, Sea-tac, Shoreline, Woodinville, and the Port of Seattle (Sea-Tac Airport). King County Code 6.64.740 requires King County publish a "draft schedule of optimum response time" for taxicab drivers. The schedule below indicates the amount of time it should take for a taxicab to respond to a call from selected areas within King County. Please provide public comment on the following schedule:

SELECTED POINTS		OPTIMUM RESPONSE TIME
Zone A	North King County (North County, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Shoreline)	15 min.
Zone B	Northeast King County (Bothell, Woodinville, Fall City, Sammamish, Issaquah)	20 min.
Zone C	Eastside (Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond)	15 min.
Zone D	Southwest King County (White Center, Burien, Des Moines, West Kent, SeaTac Airport)	15 min.
Zone E	North Southeast King County (Renton, Tukwila, May Creek, Newcastle, North Kent, East I-5)	20 min.
Zone F	South King County (Federal Way, Auburn, South Kent, Maple Valley, Covington)	20 min.
Zone G	Southeast King County (Enumclaw, Black Diamond, South Kent)	30 min.

A 10-day comment period from March 6 to 16 is provided. If you have any comments, please submit them in writing or by email to Diana Toledo at [Diana.Toledo@metrokc.gov](mailto:Diana.Toledo@metrokc.gov) or send your comments to:

King County Licensing  
Attn: Diana Toledo  
King County Administration Building, Room 403  
500 Fourth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

Comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. March 16, 2006.  
Updated: Mar 3, 2006





**King County**  
**Records, Elections and**  
**Licensing Services Division**  
Department of Executive Services

500 Fourth Avenue, Room 403  
Seattle, WA 98104-2337  
206-296-2713

[www.metrokc.gov/lars/business/taxicabs.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/lars/business/taxicabs.htm)